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SUBJECT: SOUTH DARFUR SECURITY UPDATE

REF A) KHARTOUM 1707

11. (SBU) Summary: Fighting between rebel and government forces in South Darfur had been largely absent for several months until the November 19 SLA/MM and SLA/U attack on a central police convoy and subsequent government bombings, sources told poloffs during a trip to Nyala November 24-26. Meanwhile, violent clashes between tribes of South Darfur have unexpectedly subsided over the past month, though some questioned the sustainability of government-brokered reconciliation efforts. Sources told poloffs that the government continues to recruit former janjaweed militiamen for regular and paramilitary forces, though some disgruntled Arab tribal factions in South Darfur have shown inclinations of turning against the government. Banditry on South Darfur's main transit routes has decreased since the GOS has deployed a company of Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in Tortahan, southeast of Nyala. Carjackings of UNAMID and INGO vehicles within the city of Nyala also have decreased since UNAMID instituted a two-car minimum for travel and boosted the use of its fleet of over 70 mini-buses. The mini-buses and other non-sport utility vehicles are not very attractive targets for rebel/militia bandits due to lack of off-road capability. While UNAMID officials claimed credit for helping reduce insecurity in South Darfur, traditional Fur leaders still dismissed the force as impotent and urged direct USG military intervention to establish security in the region. End Summary.

GOS-REBEL FIGHTING STARTS ANEW IN SOUTH DARFUR

12. (SBU) In a November 24 meeting with poloffs, UNDSS Officer Will Mulders stated that he had heard reports of Russian MiG fighters bombing rebel positions in the area around Abu Ajura in South Darfur on November 22, though noted that UNAMID has not been able to confirm the details of the attack. Mulders speculated that the bombing was retaliation against SLA/MM and SLA/U for their assault on a Central Reserve Police convoy near Abu Hamra on November 19 (Reftel). Until these incidents, fighting between the rebels and the GOS have been largely absent from South Darfur for several months, he said. There were also reports of internal fighting among Darfuri rebels in neighboring Bahr al Ghazal in mid-November. According to a UNAMID poloff, an exchange of fire between the forces of SLA/Ahmed Abdulshafie and Saddiq Abdelkarim Nasir, both members of the so-called "Group of 11" alliance of former SLA factions, resulted in the death of the latter. Saddiq was one of the few members of the G-11 who had military strength on the ground with over 300 men, said the UNAMID poloff, but the implications of his death are unclear. Abdulshafie remains close to the SPLM since the Juba Darfur rebel unification process in late 2007.

BUT TRIBAL CLASHES SUBSIDING

13. (SBU) Mulders stated the volatile relations between South Darfur's many tribal groups, often characterized by violent clashes, have actually calmed over the past month. Mounting tensions over land between the Zaghawa (primarily SLA/MM and SLA/Unity) and the Arab Maaliya tribe over grazing rights around the town Muhajiriya have unexpectedly dwindled, and clashes between the pro-regime Salamat, Habbania and Fallata tribes around Tulus have also subsided. UNAMID has not been able to access the latter area, but it appears to be relatively calm, he said. Mulders was unsure what to attribute this decrease in hostilities to, but noted that predictions of an earlier-than-usual southern migration of nomadic tribes had never materialized.

14. (SBU) UNAMID Sector South Commander Brigadier General F.E. Eze told poloffs that Sector South has remained relatively calm, noting that tensions between Zaghawa and Maaliya around Muhajiriya and Gereida subsided in part because of UNAMID intervention. "The problems began when the Maaliya, the original owners of the land, were driven away by the Zaghawa," he said. "Minnawi's men tried to impose a tax on Maaliya for grazing rights," and that's when problems ensued. He credited UNAMID with establishing a presence in the area as well as confidence building patrols for locals collecting water and firewood. "We've gone into a lot of areas where we never had a presence before," he said.

EFFECTIVENESS OF RECONCILIATION EFFORTS QUESTIONED

15. (SBU) Tribal clashes in South Darfur are often settled by a government-brokered reconciliation, but some observers are skeptical that such deals provide lasting peace or solutions. Dr. Mahmoud Adam Daoud, Lecturer at the University of Nyala, noted that such

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talks always take place among tribal elders based in the regional capital of Nyala. "They spend time and money and sign documents" he said, "but those who are actually doing the fighting are not at the table." As a result, the root causes of the conflict are never addressed, he said. Others were skeptical of the government's intent to really reconcile differences between warring tribes.

16. (SBU) Among the most recent government-brokered reconciliation agreements was one concluded between the Arab Beni Halba and the Daju African tribe in early November, according to UNAMID Civil Affairs Officer Katherine Reyes. Reyes noted that unlike previous reconciliations, the government did not offer to fund compensation arrangements, instead encouraging the parties to take on the responsibility themselves. She also noted that while clashes between the Fallata and Salamat tribes have subsided in recent months, they were both being strongly encouraged by the government to follow the path of the Beni Halba and Daju and to reconcile. But the Fallata and Salamat were both heavily armed by the Khartoum regime, making the situation much more difficult to resolve, she said.

GOS RECRUITS ARAB MILITIA FOR ARMED FORCES

17. (SBU) SPLM Minister of Agriculture of South Darfur Omar Abdelrahman told poloffs that over the past few months several thousand new Janjaweed militiamen have been recruited to Central Reserve Police and Border Intelligence Forces, and dispatched to Khartoum for training. The recruits are drawn most notably from the Mahamid of the Aballa (camel-herding) Rizeigat, he said, adding that since announcement of the ICC indictment of President Bashir there has been a complete turnaround from talking about disarmament of Janjaweed to recruiting them into military and security service ranks. The irony, he said, is that this recruitment is being carried out in the name of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). "The NCP tells us, 'You integrated southern militias into the SPLA, we're just doing the same,'" he said. Abdelrahman also claimed that approximately 2,000 Arab militiamen who were not received by Sudanese military and paramilitary forces have sought to join the ranks of the SPLA, and that SPLA leadership remains worried about this prospect.

THOUGH SOME ARAB TRIBES TURNING HOSTILE

¶8. (SBU) UNDSS Officer Mulders noted that certain Arab tribes in South Darfur have shown inclinations of turning to violent action against the government. Back in August, a faction of Fallata militiamen upset with floundering reconciliation efforts attacked a police post near Tulus and threatened further action, he said. And while the Beni Halba have apparently sorted out their differences with the Daju, they are still seething at the death of some of its members at the hands of GOS bombs on July 1. "There is still a lot of tension between the Beni Halba and the government, though the government has paid them blood money," he said. Mulders also recently heard an unsubstantiated rumor that the Southern Rizeigat were planning to form a militia to attack government forces moving through their areas.

BANDITRY DECLINES WITH DEPLOYMENT OF GOS FORCES

¶9. (SBU) UNDSS Officer Mulders reported that banditry on South Darfur's main transit routes has decreased since the GOS has deployed a company in Tortahan, southeast of Nyala. The Central Reserve Police continues to provide protection for convoys of private trucks, he said, often with considerable skill and mobility. Alas, such protection is not free, as it turns out; Mulders reported a recent convoy of over 100 trucks travelling from Bilal to Ed Daien had to pay a fee of up to \$50 per truck (directly to the CRP). UNAMID Sector South Commander Gen. Eze told poloffs there was significant GOS troop movement around Sharaya, but he was unsure whether the troops were reinforcements or constituted a new unit.

CARJACKING DOWN DUE TO NEW SECURITY PROCEDURES

¶10. (SBU) UNDSS Officer Mulders also noted that carjackings of UNAMID and INGO vehicles within Nyala have decreased since UNAMID instituted a two-car minimum for travel and boosted the use of its fleet of over 70 mini-buses. "Not a single bus has been stolen," he stated, noting that vehicles lacking four-wheel drive are unappealing to potential carjackers who are either from rebel or militia groups or sell them to rebels or militia who need vehicles

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that can be turned into "technicals" capable of carrying fighters to battle across rough terrain. (Note: More often than not, the vehicles wind up in the hands of the rebels, who are poorly funded and lack the government's ability to purchase and ship large numbers of vehicles into Darfur. End note.) In November, only five UNAMID and INGO vehicles were carjacked in South Darfur, he said, and two of those had been recovered. This compares to thirteen in October and nine in September according to UNAMID statistics. Since the beginning of the year, more than 60 vehicles have been lost to carjacking in South Darfur, and "everybody's involved. Rebel movements, militias, government forces and organized crime are all a part of it," according to Mulders.

UNAMID STILL SEEN AS WEAK

¶11. (SBU) UNAMID Sector South Commander Brigadier General F.E. Eze stated that while his force is facing chronic logistical problems, it has succeeded in securing supply routes for humanitarian access and instituted a series of confidence building patrols. But according to Eze, Sector South patrols are often restricted by Sudanese authorities who claim responsibility for certain areas. A UNAMID poloff told Emboff in confidence that while there is need for a mechanism to monitor violence in Darfur, it should be independent from UNAMID. "UNAMID is hampered by its relationship with the GOS," he said, adding that its leadership remains quite cautious of offending the GOS. "UNAMID never issues press releases, even when we know the GOS is bombing villages around Darfur," he said.

¶12. (SBU) Dr. Salahdeen Mohamed, the NCP-designated Maqdoum (Viceroy) of the Fur tribe, asserted that UNAMID has been "guarded" and essentially contained by the Central Reserve Police and that it

could never constitute an effective peacekeeping force. To that end, he hoped to see USG boots on the ground to establish security in Darfur. "We want to see U.S. intervention as soon as possible," he said. Even though Dr. Salahdeen was chosen as a pro-regime stooge, he has continued to distance himself from the NCP at least since the Kalma massacre in Kalma camp of August 25, 2008.

¶13. (SBU) The one area where UNAMID has achieved relative success is in Kalma Camp. UNDSS Officer Mulders reported there have been no serious incidents reported in Kalma camp since the Bangladeshi FPU instituted 24-hour patrols in early September. UNAMID Civil Affairs Officer Katherine Reyes also reported that IDPs have told her there have been no killings in Kalma camp since the 24-hour patrols began.

COMMENT

¶14. (SBU) While UNAMID sources in South Darfur were generally optimistic about decreasing levels of violence and insecurity, Darfurians were discouraged and demoralized, and their perception of UNAMID remains largely negative. Indeed, UNAMID's role in reducing tribal violence in South Darfur is questionable, and its presence on the ground deterred neither the November 19 rebel attack on a CRP convoy nor the subsequent GOS bombings. The eventual deployment of the Ethiopian, Egyptian and Tanzanian battalions to Sector South could go a long way toward expanding UNAMID's capabilities on the ground, but the problem is not just numbers, it will also require a will to aggressively implement UNAMID's mandate on the part of its leadership which has so far been lacking. The poloff's comments about UNAMID's ability to monitor a ceasefire and call out the government on violations are telling. There is no question that an independent mechanism would be more effective, the problem will be funding it and getting the GOS to approve. We will need to keep consistent pressure on UNAMID and DPKO in New York for them to live up to this aspect of its mandate.

FERNANDEZ